

## SIR STAFFORD COMES TO INDIA

By H. RAMIAH

*During the last few weeks, which saw a temporary cessation of large-scale fighting, the political interest of the world centered around India. The fate of more than 350 million Indians hung in the balance.*

*In spite of the conflicting news, the facts about the present struggle in India are clear: India, under British rule against her will and hence forced to participate indirectly in the war, wants independence today more urgently than ever, not only for its own sake but also in order to escape from being drawn directly into the war. Great Britain, on the other hand, has the greatest interest in keeping this most precious jewel in the British crown. She is ready to promise much for the future if only she can have the support of India's men and materials in her desperate struggle today. Finally, the Axis nations are out to destroy the military power of the British Empire wherever they find it—even in India, as long as it remains there. Hence, while Britain wants a British India, the Indians as well as the Axis powers want an India free from British domination.*

*London has postponed the facing of the Indian issue to the last possible moment. Only after Rangoon, the gateway to India, had fallen into the hands of Japan, did the British Government decide that something had to be done. Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India with an offer which was, as usual, "too little and too late." He has lost the first round: he declared in the beginning that the Indians would have to accept or reject the British plan as a whole. The Indians did not accept it. Yet Sir Stafford remained for further negotiations.*

*The purpose of the following article is not to save our readers the trouble of reading their daily papers and of studying Sir Stafford's plan and the Indian answers. Its purpose is rather to analyze India's position, from which her decisions and actions are growing. The author is the Far Eastern correspondent of many Indian newspapers, including "The Bombay Chronicle," "The Hindu," "The National Herald," "The Hindustan Standard," and a man who is personally familiar with the leading figures of India today. His article is written from the point of view of an Indian nationalist.—K. M.*

**W**HAT the British have been calling the outposts of the Indian Empire, namely, Egypt, Burma, and Malaya, are all either seriously menaced or in their opponents' hands. The fall of Malaya and Rangoon occurred in such quick succession that the British hardly have time to prepare even an improvised defense of India. Strange as it must seem today, until recently they never expected a threat to India from the East. They never took Japan into serious account. As a result, the defense of the eastern half of India depends upon a small, semi-expeditionary force coupled with some mobile units.

### FRONTIER WITHOUT DEFENSE

There are four military commands in India, known as the North, South, East, and West Commands, but all stationed in the Northwest or in regions close to the Northwest of India. The reason for this was that the British always feared an attack on India from that direction, either by the Russians or by mountain tribes. Hence an area covering the larger part of India and situated to the southeast of the line Delhi/Bombay has practically no defense arrangements. The 60,000 British and 150,000 Indian troops (besides about 35,000 reservists) constituting the peace-time army of India were meant

to be a field army and a first-line defense to cover the general mobilization in the case of an emergency. As a reason for this strategy the British pointed to the 72 expeditions they had been forced to make against tribesmen between 1850 and 1922, and they maintained that the defense of the North-west means the defense of India. This calculation was a serious mistake.

Another factor of great influence in the War of Greater East Asia is the steady pounding to which the British have been subjected by the Germans since the autumn of 1939, by which the main military strength of the British has been weakened beyond immediate repair. The British have been putting up a bluff in our part of the world, making more of Singapore than it ever was. The Indian troops stationed in Singapore, except for a small section, were not a well-trained army. Most of them did not know the meaning of artillery, since it is the policy of the British to train only a limited part of the Indian Army in the use of artillery. That limited artillery-trained part was serving in Egypt, Iran, etc., and the freshly recruited men brought to Singapore were trained only as drivers of military lorries and trucks. Moreover, the propaganda of the Indian National Congress, to which these recruits had been subjected while they were still villagers, had already had its share in demoralizing them against aiding the British.

It is no wonder that, when the well-trained, well-equipped, and enthusiastic Japanese forces attacked Singapore, the British defense fell to pieces in no time. This is what is likely to happen in the defense of India also. It has already been the case in Burma.

The British assertions that there are large defense arrangements along the Indian border are propaganda. Supplies of arms from the British Isles cannot reach India, and the Indian armament factories cannot produce anything beyond rifles and simple machine guns. Even the precision parts of the latter have to be imported from Britain. As for the manufacture of airplanes in

India, this is a myth. An assembly plant for parts imported from America has been opened. But can America supply planes to all parts of the world? If so, why were the British short of planes for the defense of Malaya? And the one manufacturing center that was inaugurated last year in Bangalore is still in an embryonic state.

### *TWO FORCES*

With this threatening situation obtaining to the east of India, it is of great interest to study the events taking place inside India, especially as the Axis powers have declared that they are willing to help India achieve her independence.

There are two main forces to be considered within India. On the one hand are the British, who are making every effort to survive this war as an empire and to retain India in their hands, even at the cost of every other possession they hold in the East. For it was India through which they got Burma, Malaya, Hongkong, etc., and could stabilize their hold on South Africa. From Aden to Capetown, from Karachi to Hongkong, it was the Indian sepoy who guarded the British interests, and it was the money of the Indian taxpayer which financed the expeditions that conquered all those territories. If England can manage to retain India in the present crisis, her future may not be so hopeless. With this in mind, the British are applying all their skill to line up the Indian people with the British cause and for the defense of India.

The other force are the Indian nationalists, who for years have been yearning to free their country from the British and have been patiently working toward that purpose. Gandhi's leadership of the Indian National Congress in its fight against the British dates back to 1920. The intensity and fervor with which he has been fighting have never waned during the last twenty-two years. The fact that he started a Civil Disobedience movement in India in October 1940, in the midst of Britain's entanglement in the present

war, should be enough to show his determination and the aim he has in view.

### HOW WILL INDIA'S LEADERS ACT?

There has been much speculation recently about the possibility of the Indian national leaders now throwing their weight on the side of the British in order to fight Japan. This is an idea that may seem natural to those who have the one desire of seeing Japan beaten in the War of Greater East Asia. But to a serious student of Indian affairs it is an idea that is, to say the least, amazing.

The actions of the Indian national leaders are influenced by one main consideration, that of India's advantage. What are the benefits to be derived for India by their joining the British side? And what are her prospects if the Indian nationalists do not throw in their lot with the British? By weighing the answers to these questions we shall discover the likely attitude of the Indian leaders. And we should bear in mind that these leaders are no children in British politics, to be cajoled with sweet promises. Their attitude will be governed by the consideration, whether Britain is at all in a position to carry out her possible offers and to maintain whatever would be the new position.

This is perhaps the place to mention that the demands of the Indian nationalists were not born out of the present circumstances, and that the nationalists have no intention of making political bargains. In 1929, when the Indian National Congress first passed a resolution demanding immediate recognition of India's independence, the British were not involved in any war or internal troubles. And as for political bargains, there were many offers made by the British of late which have been entirely disregarded by the Indian nationalists. Since it is clear that the most opportune time has arrived for India to gain complete independence, there is no reason for the Congress leaders to go back to the point making of political bargains with

a Britain that has been defeated again and again in all her battles.

### NEHRU'S ATTITUDE

During the last fourteen months many thousands of Indians under the banner of Gandhi were jailed because they have made it impossible for the British to mobilize a sufficiently big army in India. And thirty-two members of provincial governments went to jail for the same reason, having spoilt all British hopes for their war efforts. Since the very beginning of the war in 1939, Indian nationalists have declared that they have nothing to do with British wars and that they should be left alone.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, declaring the non-co-operation of the National Congress in British wars, and especially in the present war of huge armaments, said in a statement in June 1940: "I should personally like to say that this war and the events that preceded it have impressed me more than ever with the futility of violence. And in India, as her circumstances are today, the idea of our organizing violence for defense against external aggression of a major power is futile. We cannot do so effectively, at least in this present crisis, and in any event we are not going to do so in order to help an empire that dominates over us."

Nehru's statement clearly brings out two points: that the Indian nationalists do not think in terms of defending India by means of the British army in India, but, having no organized force of their own, would rather not fight at all against any major power; and secondly that under no circumstances will they fight for British imperialism.

A further quotation from that same statement would seem to indicate that in an indirect way Nehru expresses his hopes of India being treated as a neutral by other powers. He said: "I do not think there is the slightest likelihood of a major invasion of India." That Nehru, in the midst of war, should say this can only mean



that he would rather choose to be friendly with the outside powers than be an ally of the British. One should bear in mind that Gandhi, Nehru, and the other nationalist leaders must act and speak under the noses of British guns, which naturally calls for very careful tactics and language. There is much to indicate that the great powers have understood the attitude of the Indian leaders.

### ARE THEY ANTI-JAPANESE?

Yet there are still many people who believe that the Indian National Congress and Nehru are anti-Japanese. The origin of this misunderstanding lies several years back, in the early days of the Sino-Japanese conflict. At that time not only Nehru but educated Indians in general thought that Japan and Britain would come to terms over the partition of Asia, so that Britain's imperialist policy would be allowed to continue undisturbed in India in exchange for Japan's annexation of China. This view was strengthened when it became known that the British seemed willing to accede to the Japanese demand for closure of the Burma Road (which was later actually closed for three months). The Indians, who had been fighting the British so long for the independence of their country, were alarmed at the thought that Japan was going to be an imperialistic partner of Britain and hence expressed open sympathy with China.

Indians have always felt antagonistic towards any power that became friendly with Britain. That is why the Indians today are looking with suspicion toward the USSR, the ally of Britain. So the apparent friendship between Britain and Japan was looked upon with disfavor. India desired a break between Britain and Japan, which indeed occurred later when the Burma Road was opened again. Britain's switch resulted in the so-called ABCD encirclement directed at Japan.

### CHIANG KAI-SHEK'S VISIT

The British invitation to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to meet the Indian

national leaders is another move by the British to instill fear of Britain's opponents into the Indians. However, it seems this scheme fell through, as we assume that the Generalissimo found a great lack of statesmanship on the part of the British, quite aside from there being neither strategy nor solidity in the British defenses. The silence that the Generalissimo has maintained ever since he returned from India shows that he must have grave doubts as to British methods and practices there.

Moreover, Indian leaders will not be induced to sacrifice the interests of India's cause of freedom for the convenience of other individuals or the British. The Indians know from bitter experience how great a mistake it was to help Britain during the Great War. The problems of Chiang Kai-shek are rather beyond aid on the part of India, which is a subject country fighting for its independence without any army or weapons whatever. Furthermore, the Indian National Congress would not think of making India an enemy of the Axis powers, which have declared their sympathy with India's aim of becoming a nation free of all domination. So it was quite natural for the Indian national leaders to have honored and fêted the Generalissimo as a distinguished guest but to have taken leave of him without further commitments. This, as well as the fact that the Indian national leaders did not ask the Indian troops in Malaya to resist the Japanese, should demonstrate clearly enough that they wish to remain aloof from British entanglements.

### OTHER POWERS TO RULE INDIA?

Does this mean, as some critics interpret it, that the Indians would welcome any other power to rule India in place of Britain? No Indian of the present generation would seriously consider this possibility. The powers who appear to be gaining the upper hand in this war have assured India that she will be allowed to assume her rightful position and that there will be an "India for the Indians."

And no matter how things turn out on the Russian front, the USSR will not have sufficient strength left to annex other countries.

British and American propaganda has done its best to raise fears in the hearts of the Indians that either Japan or Germany will try to dominate India, should the British be defeated. Though apprehension on this account caused anxiety among the Indians for some time, it is hardly suitable that these apprehensions be raised by the British, the very ones to have exerted domination over India. As early as the end of 1940, Gandhi reacted to this propaganda in his own peculiar way. Addressing the Indians, he said: "You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want. If these gentlemen desire to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourselves—men, women, and children—to be slaughtered." From that day onwards the British ceased direct propaganda and adopted other methods.

#### *BRITISH STATESMEN WAKE UP*

Recent utterances by Premier Tojo of Japan as well as Berlin press dispatches regarding India have stirred British statesmen out of their usual complacency. They have finally at this late hour become alive to the realities of the Indian situation. In consternation and haste they are making new proposals to India every day. They thought first of dispatching Sir Archibald Sinclair, the British Liberal, to India to try his Liberal balm on the Indians, although on many previous occasions, including that of Sir John Simon's visit in 1928, the British Liberals had failed to make any impression on nationalist India.

In the end Prime Minister Churchill must have been made to see the uselessness of sending a Liberal to India, whereupon another delegate was chosen in the person of Sir Stafford Cripps. But again it would be erroneous to assume that Sir Stafford is able to make any deep impression on the Congress leaders. As

in the case of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Prime Minister Churchill is trying ostentatiously to work through personalities who are reputed to be friends of Nehru, so that a false impression may arise in the camp of Britain's opponents.

#### *IMPERIAL COMMUNIST*

Sir Stafford Cripps, a British Socialist (or rather Communist), is at heart an Imperialist. If he were a true socialist or communist he would never have accepted this mission to India, since it means an effort to preserve the British Empire, a thing contrary to the tenets of his professed creed. That he is an Imperialist became clear to the Indians during his last visit there in December 1939, shortly after the outbreak of the present war. He came as a so-called friend of Indian support for the British war effort.

He failed to convince the Indian leaders that he was free of the psychology of British Imperialism, and there was a general sentiment in Congress circles against accepting Sir Stafford's professions and offers of friendship towards India, as he was obviously interested in the Empire first and last. His socialism was recognized as nothing but a reaction against the ruling political clique in England and its grasp upon the riches of the Empire. Thus his true aim was a more equitable distribution of Empire spoils among Britons rather than the abolishment of British Imperialism.

#### *PROMISES, PROMISES!*

I had an opportunity to interview Sir Stafford at Allahabad in 1939. At the time he said that the greatest interest in Indian affairs was being taken by Parliamentarians in England, and that an influential group favorable to Indian aspirations was growing in the House of Commons. He also said that representatives of different political groups in Parliament would visit India in the course of the following months. That was two years ago, and nothing took place to substantiate his words until the recent Japanese military

successes made the British Government tremble for their country's hold upon India. The Indian leaders are well aware that Sir Stafford's promises can mean little as long as Churchill is at the head of the British Government. They have not forgotten that Churchill refused to see Gandhi when the latter went to England to attend the Round Table Conference.

On the occasion of Sir Stafford Cripps' visit to Allahabad, he addressed the students of the University of Allahabad, saying: "In this world it

will not be enough to have planned economy for the benefit of the common people of the world, but there should be a large degree of democratic freedom also for the common people in the new scheme of things. There should be no personal or sectional interest."

In the two years that have passed there has been no sign that the British people have any inclination to accept Sir Stafford's high ideals. Why, then, should the people of India give much heed to any future promises and fine words from him?

## GLOSSARY OF INDIAN POLITICAL NAMES AND TERMS

**All India Hindu Mahasabha**—A political organization having as its object the protection of the interests of Hindus. Inclined to co-operate with the British with the ultimate goal of achieving independence for India.

**All India Moslem League**—A political organization having as its object the protection of the Moslem interests in India. Favors the Pakistan Scheme.

**All India National Congress Party**—A political organization comprising representatives of different religious groups striving for India's independence. Founded in Bombay in 1886.

**Ambedkar**—Leader of the depressed classes of the Hindu community.

**Amritsar Massacre**—Took place on April 13, 1919, when General Dyer of the British forces ordered his men to fire into an unarmed assembly of Indians in Amritsar. 379 people were killed and 1,200 wounded.

**Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam**—President of the All India Congress Party, a great Mohammedan religious leader.

**Azad Moslem League**—A political party of Moslems opposed to the Moslem League but also striving for India's independence.

**Bose, Subhas Chandra**—President of the Forward Block. At present in Germany.

**Bose, Sarat Chandra**—Brother of Subhas Chandra Bose. Ardent member of the Forward Block; now imprisoned by the British.

**Bose, Ras Behari**—Follower of Subhas Chandra Bose. Now living in Japan and heading the Indian Freedom Associations operating outside of India in Japan, China, Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya, and the Philippines.

**Civil Disobedience**—A movement started by Mahatma Gandhi for non-co-operation with the British laws in India.

**Communal Question**—Includes all problems, political and otherwise, arising from the different interests of the various religious groups. Stressed by Britain as an explanation for the necessity of British rule in India.

**Congress**—All India National Congress Party.

**Forward Block**—Radical wing of the All India National Congress Party, from which it seceded under the leadership of Subhas

Chandra Bose. Striving for complete independence of India without compromise with the British.

**Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchad**—Known as Mahatma Gandhi. Founder of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Has resigned from the Congress Party, but retains great influence.

**Harijan Movement**—Created by Gandhi for the uplift of the depressed classes of the Hindu community known as the "Untouchables."

**Jayakar, V. D.**—A liberal Indian leader and colleague of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru.

**Jinnah, M.A.**—President of the All India Moslem League. Promoter of the Pakistan Scheme. Former member of the Congress Party.

**Johnson, Louis**—Special representative of President Roosevelt in India.

**Linlithgow, Lord**—British Viceroy of India.

**Native States**—British term for those Indian states nominally independent and ruled by Indian princes but actually vassal states under British tutelage. They number over 700 and are of varying sizes.

**Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal**—The most influential member of the Congress Party and an intellectual with leanings toward the Soviet Union.

**New Delhi**—Winter capital of India and seat of the British Government in India.

**Pakistan**—Literally "the country of the pure." It comprises those territories of India which are inhabited predominantly by Mohammedans, i.e., the Punjab, Bengal, Assam, Sind, Baluchistan. The Pakistan Scheme urges the formation of a separate Moslem territory within India as distinguished from Hindu territories.

**Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur**—Formerly a member of the Congress Party. An Indian nationalist leader of the moderate class leaning toward co-operation with Britain.

**Savarkar, V.D.**—A great Indian nationalist, president of the All India Hindu Mahasabha.

**Swaraj**—Properly "Purna Swaraj," meaning "absolute independence."

**Wavell, Sir Archibald**—Commander in Chief of the Allied forces in India and Burma.